

Incredible Infants

What should we be helping children learn before kindergarten? This handout gives some information about your child's development and learning, based on the *North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development*. We include ideas for things you can do with your child—in your daily routines of family life—that will help support your child. You can change them to fit your family's needs. If you have questions about your child's development or learning, you can speak with your child's teacher or doctor.

Approaches to Learning

Babies are learning about the world. They show interest in their bodies and in brightly colored objects. Babies use their senses to learn—they look, watch, taste, touch and smell.

Ways to Support Your Child

- Expose your baby to new sights and sounds.
- Take walks outside.
- Hang colorful toys from her stroller.
- Move her to different places around the house.

Emotional and Social Development

Babies are learning about themselves and others. They recognize family members and like to watch them. Babies repeat actions to get the same effect—they smile and coo to get a family member's attention. Babies prefer to be held by adults they feel most safe with—and sometimes cry when separated from those special adults.

Ways to Support Your Child

- Help your baby learn that family members are there to support him and keep him safe.
- Use a calm, positive voice with your baby.
- Reassure him when he is upset. He will begin to learn to comfort himself, but right now he needs you to help him. By holding and comforting with words or music, you let your baby know that he is safe—that he can rely on you to help him, even if you may not know exactly what he needs.

Health and Physical Development

Babies are growing and developing very quickly. Over time, they sleep less during the day and more at night. Babies practice body movements by kicking and moving their arms, reaching to get toys, and learning to sit up. They learn to pick up and explore objects by shaking them, throwing them, and putting them in their mouth.

Ways to Support Your Child

- Try nap and evening sleep time routines—you can start with a warm bath, soft music, and a quiet storybook.
- Before your baby can roll on her own, it is safest to put her on her back. But you can play a game called “Tummy Time” when you are playing with her: Put your baby on her tummy on a hard surface (like a kitchen floor) no pillows or blanket. And lie on the floor in front of your baby with a favorite toy or just play “peek-a-boo.” This exercise, in just a few minutes a day, helps your baby develop a strong body that will be ready to crawl and walk later.

Language Development and Communication

Babies are learning to communicate. They turn when they hear sounds, especially the voices of favorite people. They use hand signals (reaching to be picked up) and sounds (crying, cooing) to get attention and communicate their needs. Babies pay attention to short picture books, and like to look at photographs, especially of family members.

Ways to Support Your Child

- Talk to your baby—all the time. Talk about what you are doing, where you are going, and what clothes you are putting on her. The more words babies hear, the more words they will use.
- Try to read short picture books every day. You can read the words on the page—or make some up. You can talk about the pictures, and ask questions (that you answer). This helps infants learn that books are about stories—and most importantly—that books are fun!
- Whatever your home language, continue to use it at home and in your community. Learning two languages is good for a child’s brain development.

Cognitive Development

Babies use their senses to learn about the world around them. They show wonder and fascination with new objects, events, or people. Babies search for objects and people that were present—and then are not. Babies stare longer at things that are new, or things they like.

Ways to Support Your Child

- Play peek-a-boo with your baby. Cover your face with your hands or a small towel, and uncover, saying “Peek-a-boo” or some other phrase that is special for you. Change the game as your baby gets older—allow him to take your hands or towel from your face to get the fun result (Peek!)
- Say, “Where’s Papa?” and pull your hands away and say, “Here he is!”